

AIDS

Let's talk

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1. Information about AIDS seems to keep changing. What are the facts about AIDS that I need to know!

Some things about AIDS do change – such as developments in research and the number of people who have the virus.

But other things have not changed since the beginning – such as how you get AIDS and how to protect yourself from AIDS.

All the important facts about AIDS are contained in this booklet. If there are still questions you would like to ask you can call the Ontario Ministry of Health hotline at 1-800-668-AIDS, your local health unit, or your local community-based AIDS group.

2. What is AIDS?

AIDS is a disease caused by a virus called HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). The virus destroys part of the body's immune system. People who have AIDS cannot fight off unusual infections and rare cancers, and they usually die.

3. Does everyone who has the virus have AIDS?

No. Many people are infected with the AIDS virus but have no signs or symptoms of illness. Once a person is infected with the virus, it can take anywhere from a few months to ten years to become ill. However most people who have the virus will eventually get sick.



4. How is the virus spread?

The virus is carried in blood, semen and vaginal fluids and can be passed from one person to another through:

- **sexual intercourse with someone who is infected**
- **sharing needles or syringes that contain blood infected with the virus**

The virus can also be passed from an infected woman to her baby in the womb.

5. Who gets AIDS?

Anyone can get AIDS. Most people in Canada who have AIDS are men. In Africa, as many women as men have AIDS. During sexual intercourse the virus can be passed from man to man, from man to woman and from woman to man.

Some people are infected with the AIDS virus because they shared needles during illegal drug use.

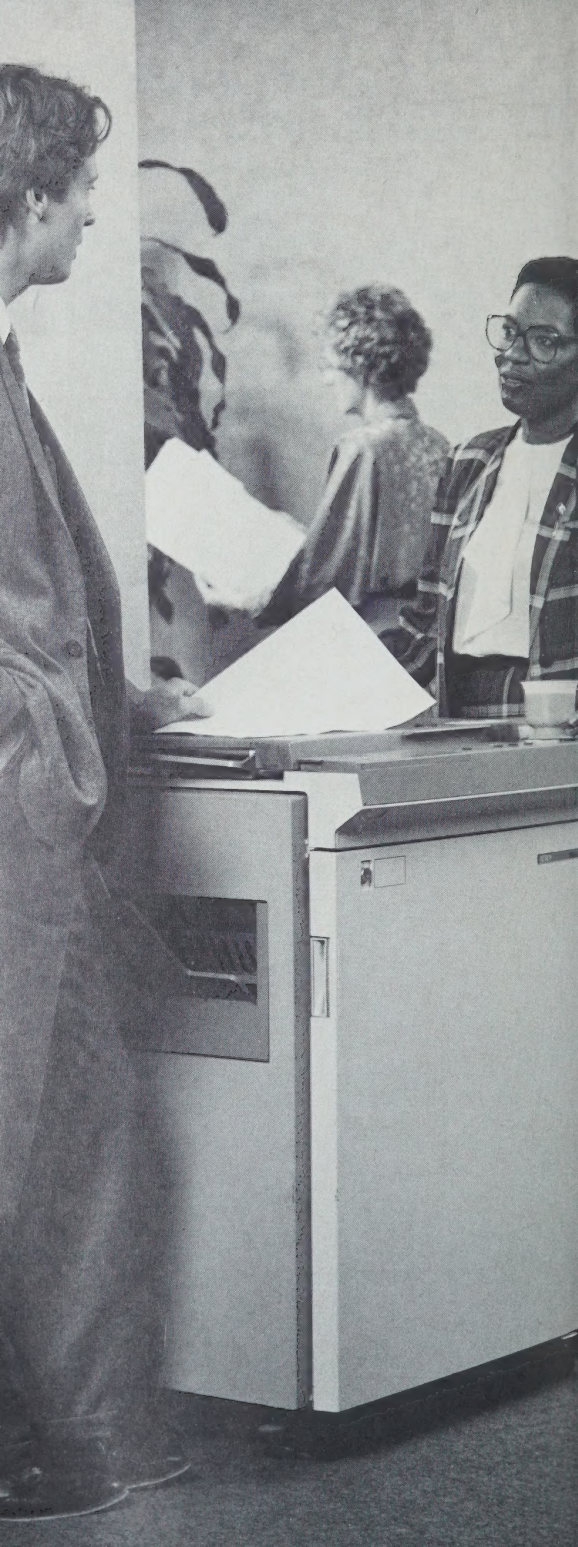
6. How can you know who has the AIDS virus?

You can't. Many people have the virus but look and feel perfectly healthy. They may not even know themselves that they have the virus. **But they can still pass the virus on to others.**

7. How can I protect myself from the AIDS virus?

You can protect yourself by understanding how the virus is spread, and avoiding the activities that put you at risk. To be safer:

- **abstain from sex.**
- **if you are sexually active be monogamous. Have only one sexual partner: a partner who is not infected by the AIDS virus.**



- don't have unprotected sexual intercourse with anyone who has had a number of sexual partners.
- if you have sexual intercourse with someone who is infected or someone whose past you're not sure of, always use latex condoms with a water-based lubricant. To be extra careful, women should use a spermicidal foam **along with** latex condoms. Use a foam that contains the ingredient nonoxynol-9: if the condom breaks, the foam will help kill the virus. Foam alone is not enough.
- don't use illegal needle drugs. For help to get off drugs, call the Addiction Research Foundation at 1-800-387-2916. In Toronto call 595-6111. If you do use drugs, don't share needles or equipment.
- don't have unprotected sexual intercourse with anyone who has used needle drugs.

8. Can I get the virus from touching or being near someone who has the virus?

No. The AIDS virus is not spread by ordinary, everyday contact with people in school or at work. You can **not** get the virus from:

- telephones
- toilet seats
- swimming pools
- whirlpools
- hugging
- sharing glasses or dishes
- buses and subways



9. Can I get AIDS from mosquitoes?

No. The AIDS virus is not spread by insects. The virus cannot reproduce inside an insect, so even those insects that draw blood cannot pass on the infection.

10. I've heard the AIDS virus is in saliva. Can I get AIDS from kissing?

Very small traces of the AIDS virus have been found in the saliva of infected people. However, of the many thousands of cases of AIDS reported worldwide, not one has been caused by saliva. No one ever got AIDS from kissing.

11. I live with one person and we've been faithful to each other. Do I have to worry about AIDS?

If you and your partner have had sex only with each other since 1978 – and neither of you has had a blood transfusion between 1978 and November 1985 or used drugs – you don't have to worry about the AIDS virus.

12. I am not in a long-term relationship. Do I have to worry about AIDS?

Yes. AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease. You should be careful. If you are sexually active, always use a latex condom with spermicidal foam. Or find other ways – besides intercourse – to express your affection for people.



13. I had a blood transfusion about five years ago. Do I have to worry about AIDS?

A small percentage of AIDS cases were caused by blood transfusions given before 1985 when scientists did not have a test for the virus. If you received a transfusion between 1978 and 1985, there's a slight chance you may have been infected with the virus. If you are concerned, you should see your doctor.

14. I am going in for surgery and may receive a blood transfusion. Do I have to worry about AIDS?

Since November 1985, the Canadian Red Cross has been testing all blood donations. Blood that contains signs of the virus is never used for transfusions. It is still possible for someone to carry the AIDS virus without it showing up in tests, but this is extremely unlikely.

15. Can I get AIDS from donating blood?

No. Needles used to take blood are sterile. They are used once and then thrown away.

16. What should I do about people who have the virus or who have AIDS?

You may not yet know anyone who has the AIDS virus but someday you might. Don't be afraid. Be understanding. That person is going through all the pain and fear of anyone who has a deadly disease. He or she will appreciate your kindness and caring.

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If you have more questions you would like to ask about AIDS, call the Ontario Ministry of Health AIDS hotline at:

1-800-668-AIDS

In Toronto Call:

392-AIDS

In Ottawa Call:

563-AIDS

Ce dépliant est disponible en français.

Si vous avez des questions que vous aimeriez poser au sujet du SIDA, veuillez appeler la ligne spéciale SIDA du ministère de la Santé :

1-800-267-SIDA

À Ottawa, composez le

563-2437

Ministry of Health



Ontario

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